

What is claimed is:

1. A method of evaluating an educational program, comprising the steps of:
 - g) developing criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
 - h) observing the criteria in the educational program;
 - i) assigning a numerical value to the criteria; and,
 - j) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria.
2. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 1, wherein the overall rating is computed by averaging the numerically valued criteria.
3. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 1, wherein the overall rating is computed by weighting the numerically valued criteria and averaging the weighted values.
4. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 1, wherein the overall rating a four-star system, with one star or less representing the lowest rating and four stars representing the highest rating.
5. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 - a) placing the criteria in an electronic database;
 - b) entering the numerical values of the criteria into the database, after observing the criteria; and,

- c) calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.
6. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 1, wherein the observation step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and parents patronizing the educational program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.
7. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 1, wherein the criteria for an early child care education program are classroom environment, accreditation of the educational program, parent involvement, staff credentials, presence of a curriculum, and staff to child ratios.
8. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 7, wherein the observation of the classroom environment criteria includes observing space and furnishings, personal care routines, language activities, reasoning activities, language materials, reasoning materials, program structure, physical activities, interaction between staff and children, interactions between parents and staff.
9. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 7, wherein the observation of the accreditation criteria includes an analysis of whether the educational program is accredited by appropriate state, local or federal institutions.
10. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 7, wherein the observation of the parent involvement criteria analyzes what levels and types of parent involvement exist by evaluating factors reflecting basic communication and responsibility of the parents associated with the educational program.

11. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 10, wherein the factors reflecting basic communication and responsiveness of the parents associated with the educational program consist of:

- program documents providing written information on the educational program's philosophy, policies and procedures;
- program documents orientation to the program for both parent and child prior to or immediately following enrollment;
- program reports timely notification of major change in program of policies and a low percentage of parents report lack of timely notification;
- 10 a high percentage of parents report that program welcomes visits by parent at all times;
- a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's physical and emotional well-being;
- a high percentage of parents report at least adequate response by program to parent concerns and suggestions;
- 15 a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's daily activities;
- a high percentage of parents report being somewhat comfortable asking teacher for information on child development or parenting techniques;
- 20 program documents conducting planned individual parent conferences at least annually to discuss child's progress and plans to meet learning goals;

- a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from program on learning foals for children and teaching approaches;
- a majority of parents who have offered ideas or suggestions to program report that suggestions are implemented;
- 5 a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from the program about community services;
- program documents regularly including parents in program evaluation; and,
- program staff and parents report planned, successful activities in parent involvement such as parenting, communication, participating or volunteering, learning at
- 10 home, leadership or decision-making, and community involvement.

12. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 7, wherein the observation of the staff credentials criteria includes an analysis of the credentials of each staff member.

13. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 7, wherein the observation of the staff to child ratios includes an analysis of whether the educational program meets target ratios of staff to child based on age groups.

14. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 13, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 0 to 18 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 5 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 3 children.

15. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 13, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 18 to 24 months of age ranges

approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 5 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 3 children.

16. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 13, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 24 to 36 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 7 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 5 children.

17. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 13, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 30 to 36 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 8 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 6 children.

18. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 13, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 36 to 48 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 10 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 8 children.

19. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 13, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 48 to 60 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 12 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 8 children.

20. A method of evaluating an educational program, comprising the steps of:
- a) developing criteria which address the strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
 - b) observing factors in the educational programs, said factors being related to one or more of the criteria;
 - c) assigning a numerical value to the factors;
 - d) sorting the factors to correspond with the one or more criteria to which the factors relate;
 - e) averaging the numerical values of the factors to give a numerical value for each criteria; and,
 - f) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria.

21. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 20,

wherein the overall rating a four-star system, with one star or less representing the lowest rating and four stars representing the highest rating.

22. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 20,

further comprising the steps of:

- a) placing the criteria and factors in an electronic database;
 - b) entering the numerical values of the criteria and factors into the database,
- 5 after observing the criteria and factors; and,
- c) calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.

23. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 20, wherein the observation step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and parents patronizing the
5 educational program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.

24. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 20, wherein the criteria for an early child care education program are classroom environment, accreditation of the educational program, parent involvement, staff credentials, presence of a curriculum, and staff to child ratios.

25. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 24, wherein the observation of the classroom environment criteria includes observing space and furnishings, personal care routines, language activities, reasoning activities, language materials, reasoning materials, program structure, physical activities, interaction between
5 staff and children, interactions between parents and staff.

26. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 24, wherein the observation of the accreditation criteria includes an analysis of whether the educational program is accredited by appropriate state, local or federal institutions.

27. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 24, wherein the observation of the parent involvement criteria analyzes what levels and types of parent involvement exist by evaluating factors reflecting basic communication and responsibility of the parents associated with the educational program.

28. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 27, wherein the factors reflecting basic communication and responsiveness of the parents associated with the educational program consist of:

- program documents providing written information on the educational program's philosophy, policies and procedures;
- program documents orientation to the program for both parent and child prior to or immediately following enrollment;
- program reports timely notification of major change in program of policies and a low percentage of parents report lack of timely notification;
- 10 a high percentage of parents report that program welcomes visits by parent at all times;
- a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's physical and emotional well-being;
- a high percentage of parents report at least adequate response by program to parent concerns and suggestions;
- 15 a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's daily activities;
- a high percentage of parents report being somewhat comfortable asking teacher for information on child development or parenting techniques;
- 20 program documents conducting planned individual parent conferences at least annually to discuss child's progress and plans to meet learning goals;

- a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from program on learning foals for children and teaching approaches;
- a majority of parents who have offered ideas or suggestions to program report that suggestions are implemented;
- 5 a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from the program about community services;
- program documents regularly including parents in program evaluation; and,
- program staff and parents report planned, successful activities in parent involvement such as parenting, communication, participating or volunteering, learning at home, leadership or decision-making, and community involvement.
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29. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 24, wherein the observation of the staff credentials criteria includes an analysis of the credentials of each staff member.

30. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 24, wherein the observation of the staff to child ratios includes an analysis of whether the educational program meets target ratios of staff to child based on age groups.

31. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 30, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 0 to 18 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 5 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 3 children.

32. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 30, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 18 to 24 months of age ranges

approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 5 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 3 children.

33. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 30, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 24 to 36 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 7 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 5 children.

34. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 30, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 30 to 36 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 8 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 6 children.

35. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 30, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 36 to 48 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 10 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 8 children.

36. A method of evaluating an educational program, according to Claim 30, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 48 to 60 months of age ranges approximately, at the low end, from 1 staff person to 12 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 8 children.

37. A method of evaluating an educational program, comprising the steps of:
- a) developing criteria which address the strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
 - b) observing factors in the educational program, said factors being related to one or more of the criteria;
 - c) assigning a numerical value to the factors;
 - d) weighting the factors;
 - e) multiplying the numerical value of the factors by the weight of the factors to give a weighted numerical value;
 - f) collating the weighted numerical values with the criteria to which it relates;
 - g) averaging the weighted numerical values within each criteria to give a quantitative value to the criteria; and,
 - h) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the quantitative value of the criteria.

38. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 37,

wherein the overall rating a four-star system, with one star or less representing the lowest rating and four stars representing the highest rating.

39. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 37, further comprising the steps of:

- a) placing the criteria and factors in an electronic database;

- b) entering the numerical values of the criteria and factors into the database, after observing the criteria and factors; and,
- c) calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.

40. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 37, wherein the observation step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and parents patronizing the

5 educational program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.

41. A method of improving an educational program, comprising the steps of:
- a) evaluating the educational program by assigning an overall rating to the educational program, said rating based on observations of criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
 - b) identifying weak areas of the educational program;
 - c) developing an improvement process to address the weak areas;
 - d) identifying strong areas of the educational program;
 - e) developing a maintenance process to maintain the strong areas; and,
 - f) reevaluating the educational program to determine the extent of improvement and maintenance.

42. A method of evaluating an educational program, comprising the steps of:
- a) developing criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
 - b) orienting persons involved in the educational program as to the criteria upon which the educational program will be evaluated;
 - c) observing the criteria in the educational program;
 - d) assigning a numerical value to the criteria;
 - e) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria; and,
 - f) debriefing the persons involved in the educational program as to the overall rating.

43. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 42,

wherein the orientation step comprises:

- a) training site personnel to implement the evaluation;
- b) informing the staff, administrators and other personnel of the educational program of the goals and implementation of the evaluation; and,
- c) informing the students, the community and the parents of the educational program of the goals and implementation of the evaluation.

44. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 42, wherein the overall rating a four-star system, with one star or less representing the lowest rating and four stars representing the highest rating.

45. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 42, further comprising the steps of:

- a) placing the criteria and factors in an electronic database;
 - b) entering the numerical values of the criteria and factors into the database,
- 5 after observing the criteria and factors; and,
- c) calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.

46. A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 42, wherein the observation step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and parents patronizing the
5 educational program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.

47. A system for evaluating an educational program, comprising:

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- a) means for developing criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
- b) means for observing the criteria in the educational program;
- c) means for assigning a numerical value to the criteria; and,
- d) means for assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria.